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The Analysis of Ukrainian Policy in the Field of State-Religious Education: Secondary School

Abstract

The article provides an overview of approaches to the organization of religious education in secondary schools of Ukraine during the period of its independence, which complements the European experience of studying this issue. Attention is paid both to the historical circumstances of the beginning of school religious education in the interaction of religious, state and educational institutions, and to modern issues related to the policy of introducing subjects of religious and moral orientation in Ukrainian schools. The current legislation in the field of religious education in a secular school, the real practice of its implementation, and the challenges that give an idea of the specifics of Ukraine in this matter in the European space, are analyzed. The legislative work of Ukraine on resolving the issue of legal regulation of the possibility of establishing educational

institutions of different levels of accreditation by religious organizations is generalized. Statistical data on the state of teaching religious and moral subjects in schools of Ukraine are analyzed. Prospects and possibilities of further teaching of religious education in the Ukrainian public school are considered.

Keywords

education, religious education, subjects of religious and moral orientation, religious organizations, normative-legal base, state-confessional relations

Introduction

The war conflict undoubtedly had a significant impact on the education system at secondary schools in Ukraine and brought questions of ethics and religiosity into the education system¹ In promoting this new lifestyle in the education system this study encourages believers to adopt practices that prioritize sustainable living, responsible resource use, and a deep appreciation for the educational world.²

Furthermore, the diverse cultural, historical, and religious backgrounds across the European continent contribute to a wide range of perspectives on the role of religion in education. The influence of political movements, therefore, varies from country to country, shaping the policies and methods employed in religious education.³

As European societies continue to evolve, the discourse on religious education in public schools remains a dynamic and evolving conversation. Scholars, policymakers, and educators engage in ongoing dialogue to navigate the delicate balance between political considerations, educational objectives, and societal values to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to religious education across the continent. There is also need to connect young and old generation

¹ Radková L, Ludvig Cintulová L, Brédová S, Budayová Z, *Analysis of mental wellbeing of volunteers at the border crossing Vyšné Nemecké due to war conflict in Ukraine*, "Acta Missiologica" 16 Nr 2 (2022), p. 170.

² Jarmoch, Edward Zygmunt (eds), *Social Work and Socio-Pathological Phenomena in the School Environment*, "Acta Missiologica" 16 Nr 2, (2022), pp. 141.

³ Černek, M (eds), *Distance learning at universities in central and eastern Europe during the covid-19 pandemic: a pilot comparative study*, "Acta Missiologica" 17 Nr 1 (2023), pp. 169.

to support understand, sharing knowledge and social resilience due to disharmony in the society.⁴

The system of indoctrination and its implementation into the socio-political system requires the coordination not only of educational institutions, national programs, but also the training and preparation of pedagogues who can connect and lead religious education not only formally, but also actively taking into account the specific needs of groups of citizen-migrants, marginalized groups and disadvantaged young people.⁵ The need for ongoing professional development for educators has been highlighted. The post-COVID era may see increased investment in training educators to adapt to evolving teaching methods, technology integration, and addressing the socio-emotional needs of students.⁶

The influence of political movements on the state and methods of religious education in public schools on the European continent has, in recent times, increasingly become in recent times, a subject of both scientific analysis and reflection on the existence of various approaches and ways of organizing religious education. In most countries in the post-Soviet space, the experience of the relationship between political movements and the state of religious education is still in a position of unstable definition and various challenges. The state of Ukraine is no exception in this process. However, the situation and trends in religious education in public schools in Ukraine, unfortunately, are not covered in international studies. Thus, Elsa Kuyk, Roger Jensen, and others in their work "Religious Education in Europe"⁷ review more than thirty European countries, thirteen of which were previously in the socialist camp. However, the state of religious education in Ukrainian schools is not taken into consideration in this study; neither does the study entitled "Religion and

⁴ Bundzelová K, Ludvigh Cintulová L, Buzalová S, *Sociálna práca s osobami vyššieho veku*, Bratislava 2023: Vysoká škola zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce sv. Alžbety v Bratislave, p 119.

⁵ Cauda R.; Ondrušová Z, Tománek P, Hardy M, *We shall start health intervention against collateral Effect of Pandemic to metabolic, cardiovascular and mental health in migrants, children and caregivers*, "Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention" 12 Nr 3 (2021), pp. 6–8.

⁶ Ludvigh Cintulová L, Tománek P, *The view of today's youth of an ideal teacher in primary education*, "Przegląd Nauk Stosowanych Gliwice": Gliwicka Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości 22 Nr 1 (2020), pp. 31–36

⁷ E. Kuyk, R. Jensen, D. Lankshear, *Religious Education in Europe: Situations and Current Trends in Schools*, Oslo, Norway, 2007, IKO Publishing House.

Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates”⁸ by R. Jackson, S. Miedema. Analyzing the relationship between school and religion in Europe, J.-P. Willaime in the book “Europe et religions. Les enjeux du XXI siècle”⁹ also does not consider the Ukrainian element of the problem. We do not find relevant publications about Ukraine in European periodicals. Therefore, we will try to investigate this issue within this article.

It should be noted that since the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence, both state institutions and religious organizations have displayed uneven interest and unequal desire to introduce a state-religious component in the field of school education in Ukraine. Thus, in several regions of western Ukraine, the filling of the secular education system with religious subjects began practically with the proclamation of independence, with the support of regional authorities of Church initiative, in a context of increased religiosity of the population, compared to Eastern regions of Ukraine. But the spread of the religious educational cluster in other regions of Ukraine saw a shift only at the beginning of the new millennium, almost a decade and a half later, on the basis of national regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Subsequently, the educational policy regarding the introduction of the religious component in the field of secular education at the secondary school level changed, depending on the political and social processes in the Ukrainian state. The analysis of this connection is quite relevant for solving not only the issues of integration of secularism and religiosity in public school education, but also the problems of development of Ukrainian democratic freedoms in general on the way to European integration.

It should be noted that since the time of independence in Ukraine, issues concerning the place of religious education in public schools are constantly discussed during round tables, debates, conferences on religious and administrative issues. In the published materials, we find legal and educational research on the introduction of the religious component in secondary schools of Ukraine. Some problems of this type are reflected in the publications of M. Lagodych (“Problems

⁸ R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse & J.-P. Willaime (Eds.), *Religion and education in Europe: Developments, contexts and debates*, Münster, 2007, Waxmann Verlag GmbH. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282671898_Religion_and_Education_in_Europe_Developments_Contexts_and_Debates (05.06.2022).

⁹ Willaime JP, *Europe et religions. Les enjeux du XXIe siècle*, Paris 2004, Fayard, Les dieux dans la cite.

of teaching Christian ethics in secondary schools of Ukraine”),¹⁰ V. Yelensky (“Religious education in the laws and educational systems of Western European countries”).¹¹ I. Bunakova considers ethical and religious education as a basis for the formation of civic values.¹² E. Mulyarchuk explores the influence of Christian morality on modern problems of society.¹³ Y. Kalnysh considers state and religious issues of the formation of theological schools in Ukraine.¹⁴ The study of the interaction of religious institutions with government agencies on certain issues in the field of education in modern Ukraine, was carried out by the following well-known Ukrainian theologians and specialists in state-confessional relations: V. Bondarenko, M. Babiy, M. Zakovych, S. Zdioruk, A. Kolodny, Y. Reshetnikov, O. Samoilenko and others. The systematic analysis of the influence of religious and state institutions on the transformation of educational policy in Ukraine, regarding the introduction of the religious component in public schools of Ukraine, remains poorly studied. Actually, this article is aimed at disclosing this issue.

Study¹⁵ addresses a significant gap in existing research by undertaking a systematic analysis of the influence of religious and state institutions on the transformation of educational policy, specifically regarding the incorporation of the religious component in public schools. By delving into this less-explored area, the article seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between religion, education, and state policies in EU. On the other hand, it is important to connect educational policy with inclusion of marginalized students to be successfully included at secondary school. Educational policies should be designed with inclusivity in mind. This means creating policies that address the diverse needs of students, including those who may be marginalized

¹⁰ M. Lagodych, *Problems of teaching Christian ethics in secondary schools*, “Scientific Bulletin of Chernivtsi University”, Chernivtsi, 2003, Ruta, 163–164, pp. 75–78.

¹¹ V. Yelensky, *Religious education and upbringing in the laws and educational systems of Western European countries*, “Man and the World” (2001), pp. 32–36.

¹² I.V. Bunakova, *Ethical and religious education as a basis for the formation of spiritual and moral values*, “Philosophy and Political Science in the context of modern culture”, Dnepropetrovsk, 2 (2011), pp. 59–64.

¹³ E. Mulyarchuk, *The problem of social implementation of religious morality*, “Philosophical thought” 1 (2006), pp. 110–130.

¹⁴ Y. Kalnysh, *Theological schools in Ukraine: a general overview*, “Human and World” (2001), pp. 32–37.

¹⁵ Kondrla P, Trstensky F, Datelinka A, *Social teaching of the church and the values of a sustainable society*, “Acta Missiologica” 17 Nr 2 (2023), pp. 143–153.

due to factors such as socio-economic status, disability, cultural background, or language proficiency. The regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of inclusive policies are essential. This involves collecting data on student outcomes, identifying areas for improvement, and making adjustments to policies based on evidence and feedback¹⁶. The pandemic has shown the potential for global collaboration in it. Post-COVID, there will likely be a heightened commitment to addressing equity issues, ensuring that people have access to quality education and resources.¹⁷

The aim of the article is to study the main trends in the educational policy of Ukraine on the integration of religiosity and secularism in education, in the context of disclosing the state and public attitude to the introduction of religious and moral subjects in secondary schools of Ukraine of I-III degrees, since the time of its independence.

Objectives of the article are: to describe the stages of the policy of religious and moral subjects introduction in secondary schools of Ukraine; to highlight the problematic aspects of the policy of introduction of these subjects in schools of Ukraine; to review the legislative work on the legal regulation of the introduction of religious educational institutions by religious organizations; to determine the best options for further integration of religious and secular education in the public school.

2. Development

The initial experience of including religious components in the programs of secondary educational institutions during the period of Ukraine's independence, began in the first half of the 1990s in the Western region of the country. The initiators on the religious side were the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. This activity of cooperation is explained by the largest percentage of concentration of the religious network of Ukraine in the Western regions at that time. Cooperation with

¹⁶ Ludvigh Cintulová L, Budayová Z, Juhásová I, *Health of Roma People living in marginalized Communities in Slovakia*, "Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention" 14 Nr. 1 (2023), pp. 7–15.

¹⁷ Ludvigh Cintulová L, Beňo P, Pavlovičová T, *Aspects of social services and well being in post covid era*, "Int J Health New Tech Soc Work" 18 Nr 3 (2023), pp. 106–114.

secular educational institutions provided religious organizations with the following opportunities: the use of state infrastructure resources, partly staffing and methodological support, which facilitated the solution of financial and organizational issues in this context.

In 1992, these initiatives of Churches and religious organizations were supported by the state regional administrations of Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil regions; later in 1993–1994 Volyn, Zakarpattia, Rivne and Chernivtsi regions, which adopted appropriate decisions on the teaching subjects of spiritual and moral orientation. Thus, from the beginning of the nineties of the last century, up to 2005, the legal provision of teaching religious subjects was regulated by normative legal acts of regional significance (relevant decisions of regional state administrations), which were lobbied by Churches and religious organizations.

It should be noted that since 2002, the issue of introduction of religious subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in secondary schools, has gradually been introduced at the state level.

However, with the publication of the order of the President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko -11-1 / 657 of July 8, 2005 “On the improvement of state-church relations, restoration of violated rights and legitimate interests of religious organizations, acceleration of solving urgent problems in their activities”, and subsequently a number of orders and letters of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in the context of this issue (order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2005 № 437 of July 26, 2005 “On studying optional courses in ethics of faith and religious studies”; letter of the Ministry of Education and Science); of Science of Ukraine № 1 / 9-436 dated August 18, 2002 “On the study of ethics in the 2005/2006 academic year”¹⁸) began nationwide legal regulation of the presence of religious education in public schools and the all-Ukrainian introduction of religion-oriented courses of spiritual and moral orientation in almost all other regions of Ukraine.

Being, without a doubt, a powerful and decisive step on this path after the Soviet period, these regulations are important in three respects. Firstly, as a fact that meant the legitimization at the state level of the study of religion in the

¹⁸ *On the study of ethics in the 2005/2006 academic year. Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 18.08.2002 № 1 / 9-436 / Collection of normative legal acts on the introduction of subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in the education system of Ukraine, Kyiv 2006, KMPU, pp. 44–55.*

general public school of any region of Ukraine. Secondly, as a concept of teaching religious courses of spiritual and moral orientation, which declared a list of principles of such study. Thirdly, as a choice that outlines the priority direction of the development of religious education in the democratic plane. The great merit of the innovation was that, as an act of political will of the then-president, it stimulated what had long been in decline – the religious and legal direction of educational research on the place and role of the religious component in the content of school education, which was a sign of positive change in the humanistic field of modern science.

Simultaneously with the process of introducing spiritual and moral subjects in secondary schools of Ukraine, there emerged the task of solving a number of problematic issues that required the participation of both state and religious structures, namely: determining the status of subjects, their names, methodological support of the educational process, staffing competent specialists, a number of financial issues, public reactions, regulation of the participation of Churches and religious organizations in the implementation of the religious component of education in public schools, in accordance with current legislation.

It should be noted that during the first decade of Ukraine's independence, the solution of these issues was unsystematic, as the process of introducing the above subjects in secondary schools of Ukraine was sporadic. Let us consider the policy of further addressing the above issues related to the process of introducing religious courses of spiritual and moral orientation in schools of Ukraine.

Regarding the determination of the status of subjects of religious and moral orientation, the discussions unfolded in the context of the introduction of these subjects in the school curriculum, either on a compulsory or optional basis. In particular, some representatives of Churches and religious organizations advocated the introduction of these subjects on the basis of compulsory study. For example, according to a poll conducted by the Razumkov Center in 2013, this opinion was supported by 26.9% of believers. 43.2% of respondents believed that the basics of religious teachings can be taught in schools only optionally at the choice of students and/or parents.

However, taking into account the current legislation (Article 35 of the Constitution of Ukraine, Article 5 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations of Ukraine", Articles 6 and 8 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education"), which approved the principles: separation of church and religious organizations and states; secular nature of education; the independence of state and municipal educational institutions from religious organizations,

as well as the fact that Ukrainian society includes both religious and non-religious communities. As a result of discussions, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine approved a decision on the introduction of religious and moral subjects in the educational process, on the basis of electives, and subject to choosing this course by students or parents, as based on writing parental statements. These principles were first reflected in paragraph 4 of the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine №437 of July 26, 2005 “On the study of optional courses in ethics of faith and religious studies” in educational institutions and further; In spite of the desire for change by religious organizations, this was not adjusted.

Regarding the decision on the issue of the specific name of the subjects of religious and moral orientation, it should be noted that there was no single model norm, as it depended on the regional specifics of the concentration of the religious network of the country. To address this issue in the summer of 2005 (according to the decree of the President of Ukraine -11-1 / 657 of July 8, 2005), a commission was established at the Ministry of Education and Science to develop the content of optional courses of religious and moral orientation. According to the results of the commission’s work, the name of the subject “Fundamentals of Christian Ethics” was proposed.¹⁹ However, it should be noted that a certain part of the public did not agree with the above decision of the commission, namely: this course limited the rights of non-Christian religions and non-believing communities.

3. Discussions

Discussions led to the fact that, in 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine approved the “Conceptual framework for the study of spiritual and moral subjects in secondary schools”, which took into account the proposals of the Forum of Atheists of Ukraine, a number of public and human rights organizations, some religious communities (Muslims, Jews and some Protestant churches). In particular, in Chapter III, among the explanation of the purpose of studying courses of spiritual and moral orientation, it is stated that the implementation of spiritual and moral education at school takes place “on

¹⁹ O.A. Samoilenko, *Religious education and upbringing in the system of secular education: the problem of interaction* “Ukrainian Polonistics” 6 (2009), p. 72.

the basis of Christian (within the course “Fundamentals of Christian Ethics”), Muslim, Jewish or other religious teachings (within the course “Fundamentals of Religious Ethics”), or on the basis of scientific and philosophical principles (within the course “Ethics”).²⁰ Thus, conditions are provided for the realization by the followers of the respective religious communities of the right to bring up their children in accordance with their own religious beliefs.

To date, there is a fairly wide range of names of these subjects that are taught, but it is to be noted that most of these subjects are Christian and still do not reflect the religious diversity of Ukraine.

Regarding the issue of educational and methodological support of the educational process, we note that the solution of this issue at the national level, as well as the rest of the above, began after 2006. Until 2005, methodological support of these courses was advisory and unsystematic. Since 2006, the relevant ministry has significantly narrowed the range of existing programs, giving preference not to individual authors, but to the programs of author groups, carrying out a more meticulous expert assessment, giving the relevant materials a positive stamp, recommending them for use in the educational process. Thus, we see that author groups at the level of their leaders have representatives of both academic and religious communities.

Regarding the solution to the issue of the teaching of these subjects by competent specialists, it should be noted that until 2005, this issue was also not regulated by the legal framework. In fact, such subjects were taught by both secular teachers and representatives of religious organizations. Settlement of this issue is provided by paragraph 8 of the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine № 437 from July 26, 2005 “About studying in educational institutions of optional courses on ethics of faith and religious studies”, the letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine № 1 / 9-436 from 18 August 2002 “On the study of ethics in the 2005/2006 academic year”²¹, paragraph 3 of the

²⁰ *Conceptual bases of studying subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in general educational institutions (courses “Ethics”, “Bases of Christian ethics”, “Bases of religious ethics”) / Collection of normative-legal acts of introduction of subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in the system of education of Ukraine*, Kyiv 2006, Publishing house of Kyiv Pedagogical University named by B.D. Grinchenko, p. 48.

²¹ *On the study of ethics in the 2005/2006 academic year. Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 18.08.2002 № 1 / 9-436 / Collection of normative legal acts on the introduction of subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in the education system of Ukraine*, Kyiv 2006, KMPU, pp. 44–55.

decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine № 8 / 1-2 of June 29, 2006 “On the conceptual foundations of the study of spiritual subjects in secondary schools moral orientation”. The texts of these normative legal acts state that pedagogical staff who have passed the relevant retraining courses in the institutes of postgraduate pedagogical education, can teach subjects of religious and moral orientation. Such institutes in Ukraine exist in all administrative-territorial units of Ukraine under the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, as well as at some pedagogical universities.

Regarding the basic training of teachers, starting from the 2008–2009 academic year, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine introduced the specialization “Christian Ethics” (letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 17.05.2008 № 1 / 11-1825). The list of higher education institutions entrusted with training in the specialty “Christian Ethics” included several higher education institutions, among which there is a confessional, but state-licensed institution – the Ukrainian Catholic University (letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 12.09.2008 № 1 / 11-4302). Public institutions have also started experimental training in the specialty “Christian Ethics” for the following areas: 6.010102 “Primary Education”, 6.010106 “Social Pedagogy”, 6.020302 “History”, 6.020303 “Philology”, which still takes place in some higher education institutions. Thus, today the training of teachers of religious courses for secondary schools is provided by both state and one denominational institution of higher education. Therefore, a small layer of teacher-priests who teach at the school today have pedagogical diplomas of the state standard.

It should be noted that to this day, the profession “Teacher of spiritual and moral subjects (or teacher of the basics of religious / Christian ethics)” is not included in the State Classification of Professions under subsection “23 – Teachers”, which means no full legitimacy of a teacher teaching religious-oriented courses in public school.

As for the organizational principles of the educational process, the teaching of religious and moral subjects by the state, until 2022-23 academic year, is determined under the following conditions: parental consent (written statement addressed to the director of the educational institution) for their child to study the relevant elective course is required for teaching; the minimum number of groups in urban areas is eight students, in rural areas, four and the group may not consist of students of one class, but of the corresponding parallel; the number of hours of such subjects is 35 hours per year; such subjects are not graded.

Thus, the teaching of subjects of spiritual and moral orientation could be carried out in accordance with the following three available options:

1. in accordance with the decisions of regional councils or other local self-government authorities on the territory of the respective administrative-territorial units. In this case, such teaching can be both compulsory and optional;
2. as an optional teaching, in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of July 26, 2005 № 437 “On studying optional courses in ethics of faith and religious studies” and conceptual principles of studying subjects of spiritual and moral orientation in secondary schools;
3. teaching at the expense of the invariant component in secondary schools with Ukrainian language of studying and study of ethics or courses of spiritual and moral orientation, according to Annex 13 to the order of the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine from 03.04.2012 № 409.

However, it should be noted that since the proclamation of Ukraine’s independence, there has been a fluctuation in the percentage of positive public opinion on the introduction of spiritual and moral subjects in Ukrainian schools. This is confirmed by sociological research. For example, according to the results of a sociological survey conducted in 2003–2004, commissioned by the State Committee of Ukraine for Religions on the question “How do you feel about the introduction of the subject “Christian Ethics” in the secondary school system?”, the vast majority of respondents (65.8%) answered – “positive”, 15.9% – “negative”, 18.2% – “indifferent.”²²

The results of the above-mentioned sociological monitoring for 2010 and 2013, show that 38.4% (in 2010) and 38% (in 2013) of respondents chose the answer that the basics of religious teachings can be taught in schools only optionally by students’ and / or their parents’ choice”; and respectively 31% and 36.5% – “Religion should not be taught in secondary schools, for this there are Church Sunday schools.”²³

²² The Church in Ukrainian society, V.P. Perebenesnyuk (ed.), *Materials of sociological research*, Kyiv 2004, ViP, p. 28.

²³ *Religiosity of Ukrainians: level, character, attitude to certain aspects of the church-religious situation and state-confessional relations (results of national sociological research)*, Religion and power in Ukraine: problems of mutual relations. Information and analytical materials for

Thus, it can be stated that there is a decrease in the percentage of public support for the process of teaching subjects of moral and spiritual orientation in secondary schools of Ukraine. In addition, in 2014, in connection with the beginning of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, the aggravation of relations between the Orthodox Churches of the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates began, which reached its apogee when receiving the tomos from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Inter-church disputes have influenced the further negative attitude towards the religious component in education, which the vast majority of society perceives not as one of the types of education, but as the mission of Churches.

In addition to these historical events, it should be noted that public opinion is influenced by democratic processes that evolve in the absence of a stable value framework. And these “delusions” are constantly generated through the constructs of imposing meanings on the society of consumption, which become a mechanism of deconstruction of educational values, including the religious ones.

Thus, public policy, scientific and pedagogical thought, inter-faith relations and public position, in their own way, influenced the general state and trends of teaching religious courses in public schools. According to the statistics of the Public Council for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Organizations at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, provided at the request of authors of this article, religiously-oriented spiritual and moral courses have been taught in all administrative and territorial centers since 2006. In recent years, the planned downward trend in the teaching of religiously-oriented subjects has been confirmed. Thus, if in the 2015–16 academic year such teaching was introduced in 6675 schools of Ukraine (38.5% of the total number of schools in the country), then in the 2019–2020 academic year only in 5279 schools (34.7% of the total number of schools). The overall percentage decrease is explained primarily by the religious and social processes mentioned above.

As for the map of regional distribution of schools covered by such training, its content differs significantly in different territorial-administrative units. This diversity can be explained, firstly, by the great achievements in the field of teaching subjects in Western Ukraine (started in 1992, before other areas). Secondly, the increased religiosity of the population, which is due to the fact that most of the Western regions before 1939 were outside the USSR and preserved the

the Round Table “State-confessional relations in Ukraine as of 2013: the movement towards a partnership between the state and the Church or the crisis of relations?”, Kyiv 2013, p. 47.

Table 1. Comparison of the regional number of religious organizations with the number of schools covered by the teaching of Christian ethics (2020–2021)

Name of regions	Number of Ukrainian religious organizations (RO) on January 01, 2021											Number of schools teaching Christian ethics (CE) in 2020–2021 academic year					
	Total RO		Orthodox Churches		Catholic Churches		Protestant Churches				Total CC (the most common)		Place by number of CC		Place by the number of CE schools	% of schools teaching CE	Number of schools teaching CE
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14			
Ivano-Frankivsk	1442	33	487	714	36	33	42	3	22	1370	X	I	I	95%	631		
Lviv	3286	70	934	1649	174	87	108	14	29	3065	I	II	II	84%	992		
Ternopil	1843	96	608	839	100	20	116	9	13	1801	IV	III	III	78,7%	542		

Chernivitsi	1381	443	218	30	36	173	113	55	103	1171	XIII	IV	72%	406
Volyn	1683	590	539	27	30	133	222	2	46	1589	VI	V	66%	390
Kharkiv	1043	383	80	14	19	103	33	51	37	720	XXI	VI	53%	357
Rivne	1636	612	443	12	18	128	292	13	24	1542	VIII	VII	50%	292
Zakarpattia	2011	670	100	474	102	81	54	19	52	1552	VII	VIII	37%	223
Sumy	545	343	97	2	1	21	20	0	3	487	XXV	IX	19%	86
Cherkasy	1448	569	321	8	8	190	46	21	82	1245	XI	X	15,7%	84
Khmelnitsky	2070	947	401	82	152	168	69	74	43	1936	III	XI	14,3%	87
Donetsk	1876	782	119	45	14	142	41	21	49	1213	XII	XII	13%	66
Mykolajiv	807	293	159	11	11	66	48	8	25	621	XXIV	XIII	12,6%	60
Chernihiv	1016	587	156	5	5	75	38	12	30	908	XVII	XIV	12,3%	57
Poltava	1194	499	243	13	7	83	71	35	48	999	XVI	XV	12%	69
Vinnitsia	2244	1017	422	25	141	155	42	105	105	2012	II	XVI	11,4%	88
Dnipropetrovsk	1540	652	224	15	10	97	67	69	48	1182	XIV	XVII	9,5%	80
Kherson	990	379	153	32	18	90	33	13	22	740	XX	XVIII	9%	35
Kirovohrad	745	295	123	7	5	95	35	42	23	625	XXIII	IXX	7,7%	24
Kyiv city	1314	319	225	26	28	71	41	58	24	792	IXX	XX	6%	24
Zhytomyr	1622	653	329	24	143	120	73	79	35	1456	IX	XXI	5%	31
Kyiv	1914	748	493	28	29	168	56	76	53	1651	V	XXI	5%	34
Zaporizhia	1142	384	131	25	13	139	43	33	35	803	XVIII	XXII	4,2%	22
Luhansk	869	436	39	10	1	87	15	16	40	644	XXII	XXIII	3%	7
Odesa	1388	606	144	27	31	164	51	53	47	1123	XV	XXIV	2,7%	21
TOTAL	37049	12406	7188	4144	1132	2689	1784	881	1038	31262			31,7%	4708

traditions of religious life. Thirdly, the activity of Churches in the multi-religious Western regions of the country, associated with the defense of confessional interests, and territorial proximity to countries where the Roman Catholic Church has a widespread influence with its established state educational standards. However, these conclusions are somewhat corrected by the Kharkiv region, where the predominantly mono-confessional population (UOC-MP), lack of experience in teaching; however, there is a decision of local governments on the widespread introduction of religious-oriented courses. Thus, we see an effective fourth component – the political will of local authorities, which has become strongly relevant in the context of decentralization with the adoption in 2014 of the Concept of local government reform and territorial organization of government in Ukraine. However, as we can see, some regions (mostly in the east) of Ukraine in terms of dissemination of religious and ethical courses resemble “another country”, where it has not been possible to significantly increase the number of schools where teaching takes place since 2005. This is clearly evidenced by Table 1.²⁴

Despite the fact that the table summarizes the data on 01/01/2021 (later statistics, the State Service of Ukraine on Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience with Protestant Churches, unfortunately, didn't cover), these figures reflect the general state of implementation of religious and ethical education, which was discussed repeatedly at various conferences, round tables, meetings, etc.

The table in orange indicates the areas where the teaching of Christian ethics is supported by local authorities, i.e. the use of administrative resources, which shows the percentage of school coverage: from 50 % to 95%.

As for the influence of historical Churches, they have to assess the situation and undergo several changes in order to moderate the large-scale introduction of religious and ethical courses in public schools.

This requires:

- leadership and authoritative position of Church leaders and their benevolent persistence in this matter;
- training of competent teachers at the modern theological-scientific, social, cultural level. Despite all the exaggerated successes of theological education (both public and private), unfortunately, it was not possible to form a new creative generation of teachers who would

²⁴ Data from (column 14, 15) *Religion. Statistical materials*, in: State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience, <https://dessa.gov.ua/statistics-rel/> (20.01.2023).

make a breakthrough in the theory and practice of religious education in public schools;

- preparation of modern educational and methodical support of the educational process in cooperation of researchers-theorists from science with far-sighted Heads of educational institutions and their creative pedagogical staff;
- a timely and adequate response to the challenges of the post-Christian world addressed to Churches, not so much as a threat as a question – how willing followers of Christ are to sacrifice pride to their beloved past, their glorious traditions and familiar methods to return to a rapidly changing society and dare to present a new modern presentation of their traditional values.

Alongside the process of introducing religious and moral subjects into the secular education system, Churches and religious organizations raised the question of the possibility of establishing the latest educational institutions of different levels of accreditation at the level of secular educational institutions.

The law was adopted, and on July 2, 2015, the President of Ukraine signed the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Establishment of Religious Organizations by Religious Organizations”, permitting religious organizations the right to establish not only religious, but also general educational institutions. The adopted law became an important step in the process of decommunization of Ukrainian education and a very fundamental event in ensuring freedom of conscience in Ukraine. The right to establish general education institutions, which is granted to religious organizations, means that the legislator has put an end to a unique situation in Europe: there is no country in the European Union that forbids churches from opening public schools and universities.

However, there are still religious educational institutions in Ukraine that have not yet been recognized by the state, despite the announced process of decommunization, even with the adoption of a progressive law that gives religious organizations the right to establish educational institutions. This is due to the following:

- „religious educational institutions operate only in the private sector;
- private religious educational institutions do not have the right to receive the same access to communal premises as general educational communal educational institutions, although they comply with the legislation of Ukraine and the necessary quality in fulfilling state educational standards;

- state funding (subvention), as well as funding from local budgets, are also absent;
- in general, the education system in Ukraine does not ensure the development of diversity of educational institutions, freedom of choice and fair competition in education, which is a guarantee of a democratic state governed by the rule of law.

4. Conclusions

The specificity of Ukrainian religious education in public schools, among the experience of other European countries, is the study of the ethical principles of the Christian religion. Coverage of all administrative-territorial centers of Ukraine in the context of teaching religious subjects, took place during the thirty years from 1992 to 2022. Since the introduction of religious subjects, support from state institutions has been regional in nature, mainly in the western regions of Ukraine. The lack of a holistic state vision of the strategy of religious and ethical education in Ukraine has led to the fragmentation and spontaneity of this process, the intervention of various political, social and religious institutions. It is obvious that ensuring the upbringing of the younger generation on religious moral principles, which for centuries have been sources of formation of the Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian culture, requires joint efforts of national and regional authorities, all participants in the educational process, religious organizations and the general public, as in the public school, it is an accentuated request for a world-view search for the Truth in a growing personality. For a further effective model of cooperation between religious and state institutions, in the context of the presence of a religious component in secular education, it is necessary to leave the teaching of religious and moral subjects on an optional basis, where there is no state provision for invariant teaching, and provide not only *de jure*, but also the *de facto* possibility for religious organizations to establish educational institutions of different levels of accreditation according to the state standard.

Prospects for further research may involve scientific research in the context of search for the reasons for the too-slow, if not artificially restrained, spread of elements of religious education in the secular school, deserves a separate study. as Also necessary are comparative studies of the introduction of a religious cluster of education in public schools of Ukraine and in educational institutions

of other countries of the post-Soviet and European space, in order to find a more harmonious model of religious education in secular public schools.

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